Race and the Enlightenment part I: From anti-semitism to white supremacy, 1492-1676

American left communist Loren Goldner's history of the origins of race and racism. Part One of Two.

Part One: Pre-Enlightenment Phase: Spain, Jews and Indians

I

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simultaneously with the Enlightenment, and that the Enlightenment's "ontology", rooted in the new science of the 17th century, created a vision of human beings in nature which inadvertently provided weapons to a new race-based ideology which would have been impossible without the Enlightenment. Prior to the Enlightenment, Europeans generally divided the known world between Christians, Jews, Moslems and "heathens"3; beginning around the 1670's, they began to speak of race, and color-coded hierarchies of races.

What was this alternative "epistemological grid" through which, prior to the 1670's, the West encountered the "Other"? A part of the answer is to be found in the impact of late medieval heresy on the ways in which the West understood the New World, and its peoples, for more than 150 years after 1492.

One of the most important sources of the heretical ideas and movements which ultimately destroyed medieval Christianity was the Calabrian abbot, Joachim di Fiore, whose work resonated through centuries of heresy and is often decried by detractors as a forerunner of Marxism4. Writing at the end of the 12th century, and sponsored by three popes, Joachim wrote a prophetic vision of history consisting of three ages: the age of the Father, which was the epoch of the Old Testament; the age of the Son, or the epoch of the New Testament, whose end was near, and the third age of the Holy Spirit, in which all humanity would enjoy ever-lasting saintliness and bliss. The heretical potential of Joachim's historical scheme was that in the third era, mankind would transcend the institution of the Church itself.

Joachim's particular interest for the questions at hand is his later impact on the so-called

"Spiritual Franciscans". In the 13th century, in response to the popularity of the heresies, and particularly the Cathar heresy in southern France, the Church created two new monastic orders, the Dominicans and the Franciscans, with the

aim of parrying heretical ideas through an appearance of reform. Important in the latter regard was the "apostolic poverty", the imitation of Christ among the poor, pursued by the Franciscans. When, after decades of success, the Franciscan order had in turn become wealthy and had begun to interpret the vow of "apostolic poverty" as an "inner state of mind", the Spiritual Franciscans broke away to return to the founding orthodoxy. Their interest for the origins of the concept of race lies in their absorption of Joachimite ideas and their later influence, at the end of the 15th century, on Christopher Columbus.

Columbus's diaries and Book of Prophecies show messianic pretensions of the highest order.

It was through Columbus, first of all, that the prophecies of Joachim di Fiore passed into the ideology of Spanish conquest in the New World. Prior to 1492, Columbus had lived for several years with the Franciscans of the monastery of La Rabida, near Huelva, in southwestern Spain. Though the idea was hardly unique to Joachim, this group, in Spain, shared in the general crusader conception of the late Middle Ages that the millennium would be inaugurated by the reconquest of Jerusalem and the Holy Land from the Moslems. The idea of the unification of the world under Western Christendom had already inspired Franciscan missions to the Great Khan in China in the 13th century with the aim of converting China to the crusade against Islam. In the 14th century, a navigator's guide called the Catalan Atlas showed "Ethiopia" (which meant Africa) under the rule of the legendary black monarch Prester John 5, who as a Christian was viewed as another potential ally against the Moslems, if only he could be found. The Portuguese voyages along the African coast after 1415 were partially inspired by a mission to enlist Prester John in such a crusade.

Columbus conceived his own expeditions as an attempt to reach the court of the Great Khan for the same purpose, and he took along a sailor fluent in Arabic and Hebrew: Arabic for the

Chinese court, and Hebrew for the Lost Tribes of Israel, believed to be living in Asia.

Columbus may have heard of a prophecy, attributed to Joachim di Fiore and current among Spanish Franciscans, that the man who would recapture the Holy Land would come from Spain6. He did use the assertion of the Biblical apocrypha of Esdras that the world was six parts land to one part water to

buttress his claim that Asia could be easily reached by sailing west. On the third voyage, off the mouth of the Pernambuco river on the (now) Venezuela coast, Columbus reported that such a large river must surely be one of the four rivers in the Garden of Eden, and was certain that the terrestial paradise was close by7.

It is therefore clear that the messianic ideas of Joachim and Columbus are, to put it mildly, from a different "cosmology" than our own. However, to see their implications for the appearance of the idea of race, some historical background is necessary.

In the 11th century, just before the medieval Christian West embarked upon the Crusades in its attempt to take the Holy Land from the Moslems, it would have been a daring observer indeed who foresaw the rise of the West to world hegemony. The West existed in the long shadow of Islamic civilization ,which in the Eastern Mediterranean, North Africa and Spain was just reaching its apogee and elsewhere still expanding vigorously, and of Byzantium (the Orthodox Christian East) which was arguably far more the heir of Greco-Roman antiquity than semi-barbaric western Europe. These civilizations in turn lived in the shadow of Sung China.

However, the 11th century medieval West was in fact already embarked on a social, economic and cultural recovery and expansion that soon posed serious problems for its more powerful rivals. This recovery continued until the late 13th century, when a system of world trade already connected Venice, Barcelona, Flanders and the Baltic region with the Levant, India and China8. By the early 14th century, however, the medieval West (like much of the rest of the world) was in total crisis, culminating in the Black Death of 1348-49, from which it required more than a century to recover9. Between 1358 and 1381, in the aftermath of the Black Death, there were major popular uprisings in France, Flanders and England, weakening (or, in the case of England, destroying)10 the old order of serfdom. In Italy, in 1378, the Ciompi uprising in Florence was a proto-proletarian rebellion.

This 14th century breakdown crisis created in Europe a situation of "interregnum", in which the institutions of the medieval period, the Papacy, the Holy Roman Empire, and feudal kingdoms such as France and England sank into chaos and interminable war; the interregnum lasted until the consolidation of the absolutist states (above all in England, France and Spain) of the 16th and 17th centuries. Into this interregnum moved high medieval messianism,

millenarianism and heresy.

Both before, and well after, the general breakdown crisis of feudalism, during the 12th and 13th century phase of high medieval expansion, western Europe underwent a series of social explosions that continued until the middle of the 17th century. These heresies and millenarian movements extended from the Cathars in southern France beginning ca. 1146, to the English Lollards and Bohemian Hussites at the end of the 14th century and the Anabaptists of the German Reformation in the 1520's and 1530's, to the radical sects of the English Revolution in the 1640's. Joachimite ideas of the "third age" beyond the Church were only one of many theological sources of these movements.

The English Revolution, which reached its most radical phase in 1648/49, was the last major insurrection in which such ideologies played a role. Figures of the radical left of the revolution, such as the Digger Winstanley, saw private property as the result of the Fall from Paradise, and articulated a kind of Christian communism as the overcoming of the Fall. The English Revolution was the last act of the Reformation, and its radical wing11, the Levellers, Diggers, Muggletonians, Ranters and Fifth Monarchy Men, the last mass social movement in which Adamic ideas of the overcoming of the Fall came to the fore. The coming of capitalist society was henceforth increasingly articulated in the new secular garb of the Enlightenment, which began to take hold in the 1670's12

The second, "Glorious" Revolution of 1688/89 coincided with a large jump in England's particupation in the new Atlantic slave economy. Prior to its takeover of Jamaica in 1655, England's New World presence had been far overshadowed by Spain and Portugal, consisting only of Barbados, St. Kitt's, some smaller islands, and the new North American colonies (at a time when the Caribbean was the far bigger economic prize, as it would remain well into the 18th century).

A mere quarter century after the elimination of the radical wing of the English Revolution by Cromwell, the idea of race, and of Enlightenment generally, moved into the space created by the ebb of millenarian utopia. It is here that we see the final disappearance, ca. 1675, of the heretical imagination and its social program. With the consolidation of English constitutional monarchy, following the consolidation of French absolutism, the post-medieval

"interregnum", in which the radical social movements, from the Cathars, by way of the Lollards and Hussites, to the Anabaptists and Diggers, could still speak the language of religion, was over. This process ended just as England and France, the countries par excellence of the Enlightenment, were beginning to surpass Spain and Portugal in the Atlantic slave trade. To better understand what the Enlightenment displaced, it is necessary to look more closely at the ideological world which produced Columbus and the Spanish world empire.

"Race", as blood consciousness, an idea unknown to antiquity and to the Middle Ages 13, first appeared in 15th century anti-Semitism in Spain as a new phenomenon, but still entangled in the old "cosmology" of Christian, Jew, Moslem and heathen14; it then migrated to the New World in the Spanish subjugation of the ("heathen') native American population (and in the further actions of the Inquistion against Jews, both in Spain and the New World).

150 years later, it re-migrated to the newly-emergent British empire, which was picking up the pieces of the decline of Spanish power, (in part by posing as a humane alternative to the widely-believed (and largely true) "black legend" of Spanish cruelty). In the second half of the 17th century, with the defeat (as indicated) of the radical wing of the English Revolution, the triumph of the scientific revolution (above all in Newton, and theorized into a politics by Hobbes), the burgeoning British slave trade, and the revolution of 1688, this evolution culminated in the new idea of race. The collapse of the idea of Adam15, the common ancestor of all human beings, was an unintended side effect of the Enlightenment critique of religion, which was aimed first of all at the social power of the Church and, after the religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries, at religion generally. But it was also the necessary

"epistemological" prelude to the appearance, in the last quarter of the 17th century, of a color coded hierarchy of races. Locke drove out Habakkuk, as Marx said, and Hobbes drove out Shem, Ham and Japhet.16

In the waning phase of more than 200 years of Anglo-American dominance of world capitalism, it is easy to forget that England was a relative latecomer in the 500 years of Western hegemony, and the significance of that latecomer status for ideology. The impulse, conditioned by the Anglo-French Enlightenment, to overlook the entwining of the Enlightenment and racism, is part of the same impulse that downplays the significance of pre-Enlightenment developments in Spain in shaping the modern world.

The initial European experience of proto-racism17 was the appearance of high medieval anti-Semitism, where it had largely receded during the lower Middle Ages (6th-11th centuries).

England expelled its Jews in 1290; France did the same in 1305, and Spain, where Jews had prospered for centuries under both Moslem and Christian rule, expelled them in 1492 18. It is interesting to note that this new19 anti-Semitism came into existence at the time of incipient national consciousness20 and also on the eve21 of the feudal breakdown crisis; the accelerating transformation of "Christian kingdoms" into nations eroded the older, tolerated citizenship of Jews (and, in Spain, also Moslems) based on religious identification, often linked to relative self-administration within the confines of the ghetto. In the English, French and Spanish22 cases, (the three major European countries which consolidated national monarchies by the late 15th century, and developed absolutisms in the 16th and 17th centuries) the expulsion of the Jews was also often a pretext for the confiscation of wealth by the heavily-indebted monarchies (often indebted to Jewish money-lenders, as Christians were at least theoretically proscribed from charging interest). In deeply-fragmented Germany and Italy, on the other hand, where early modern national unification was blocked by the medieval legacy of the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy, Jewish expulsion was a local and sporadic phenomenon, and Italy received many Jews expelled from Spain. Thus the correlation between anti-Semitism and the new national consciousness (the latter , like race itself, being unknown in the ancient or medieval worlds23) is one compelling reason to see the appearance of racism as a by-product of early modern developments.24

In 15th century Spain, anti-Semitism moved from a late-medieval "communal" phenomenon to a modern ideology of blood consciousness, and it is here that the difference between the one and the other is clearest. But Spain (which actually was still divided between the two major kingdoms of Aragon and Castile until 1469) was preoccupied for centuries with the crusade to reconquer the Iberian peninsula from the Moslems, a crusade which was only completed with the fall of Granada in 1492. The Inquisition began its activities in Spain in 1478, and its targets were first of all Jews and suspected "marranos", or Jews converted to

"new Christians" and engaged in clandestine practice of the old ways.

The foundations of the Spanish empire in the New World were laid under the so-called Catholic kings, Ferdinand and Isabel, the sponsors of Columbus. But in

1519, through dynastic marriage, the already powerful Spanish empire became the administrative centre of the largest Western empire since Rome, the Holy Roman Empire of the Habsburg Charles V.

To the already considerable Spanish lands were added the Habsburg domains in central Europe, and the Netherlands, and after 1527 two-thirds of Italy fell under Spanish dominion.

The Habsburg world empire was the hegemon of European politics, involving itself directly in the internal affairs of all countries (such as France, England, and Scotland) it did not directly control. With the marriage of Henry VIII to Catherine of Aragon, (aunt of Charles V), it appeared briefly that England as well might be integrated by dynastic alliances into the Habsburg sphere. With the marriage of Philip II to Mary Tudor, English queen from 1553 to 1558, this appeared even more likely, expressed first of all in an exponential increase in the persecution of Protestants.

European power politics, including politics in the New World, for more than 150 years after 1492 revolved around the rivalry between Spain and France, a rivalry ultimately won by France by the middle of the 17th century. This history can hardly be sketched here, but it must be kept in mind that England, in 1492 and for a long time thereafter, was a second-tier power undergoing the social transformation that culminated, after 1688, in the overthrow of absolutism, and did not begin serious empire building until the 1620's, and really not until the 1650's, when the revolution had ebbed. The story of relations between Spain and England, from 1530 onward, became completely enmeshed in the international politics of the Protestant Reformation, (which constantly reached into domestic politics), and remained into the 17th century the story of England's attempt to escape the orbit of the Spanish empire.

Catholic monarchs such as Mary Tudor (1553-1558) and the Stuarts after 1603 were considered "Spanish" and "Papist"25 and were the targets of popular resentment for that reason. England raided Spanish shipping, sent explorations looking for the mythical Northwest Passage to Asia26 (and thereby began serious trade in the Baltic and with Russia) aided the Dutch rebellion against Spain after 1566 and fought off the Armada of Philip II in 1588, but the English managed to avoid involvement in the ongoing Franco-Spanish wars on the continent, and only after emerging from the first phase of its revolution (1640-1649) was it able to intrude boldly into the scramble for empire with its massive

repression in Ireland, in its three successful wars against the Dutch, and its capture of Jamaica. Thus England's serious challenge to Spanish (and Dutch) power in the New World and in the slave trade began only in the mid-17th century, after the turmoil of its (first) revolution, when the slave trade, though already considerable, was nonetheless only one-fourth of the volume it reached in the 18th century, under Anglo-French ascendancy.27 Only after the overthrow of the Stuarts in 1688

(by which time France had replaced Spain as the major Catholic power) , and English successes in the Nine Years' War (1689-1697) and the war of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713, fought to prevent a united Franco-Spanish (and Catholic) dynasty under the control of Louis XIV) could England feel itself secure from Spanish and "Papist" interference in its internal politics28

It is this Anglo-Spanish entanglement, overlapping the Reformation and Counter-Reformation wars, the ultimate defeat of English absolutism, and the English, French, Dutch and Spanish rivalry for world domination which "mediate" between the appearance of the first ideas of racial purity and blood consciousness in 15th century Spanish anti-Semitism, their extension to the inhabitants of the New World, and the full articulation of a race theory in the Anglo-French Enlightenment. It is through this history that Jews, Indians and Africans are the successive "Others" in the development of a full-fledged Western racial doctrine.

The 1492 expulsion of the Jews from Spain created a massive Jewish diaspora in Portugal29, North Africa, Italy, the Netherlands, the Ottoman empire, and ultimately in the New World.30 But even more significant, for our purposes, were the large-scale conversions of Jews into so-called "New Christians", conversions which allowed Jews to remain in Spain and Portugal, while still leaving them vulnerable to the Inquisition and the blood purity laws.31 The New Christians were therefore able not only to arrive in the New World in different monastic orders such as the Franciscans, Dominicans and Jesuits; they were probably involved in the better part of the Spanish high culture of the 16th century siglo de oro32. Finally, Jewish messianic ideas, mixed with such currents as the Joachimite millenarianism discussed earlier, filtered into the Christian communist utopias which some religious orders, above all the Franciscans33, attempted to build in the New World with the indigenous peoples subjugated by the Spanish and Portuguese empires. The most notorious were the Spiritual Franciscans in Mexico, who came to the conclusion that Europe was

too

decadent for their ideal of "apostolic poverty", learned Nahuatl and planned a communist utopia with the Indians, until they were discovered and repressed by the Church34, but similar messianic utopias were advocated or enacted by the Jesuits in Peru and Paraguay, or in the prophetic sermons of the Jesuit Antonio Vieira in Brazil.35

One should not idealize these currents, nor exaggerate their weight in the Spanish and Portuguese colonial empires, but neither should they be judged with anachronistic criteria of the present. They were all crushed, defeated or marginalized by the opposition of local colonial elites with no scruples about massacre and forced labor36. They did not question the evangelization of the New World, nor the empires themselves, nor did they doubt that Christianity was the unique Truth; few thought that they had anything to learn from indigenous cosmologies.37 No one in the 16th century, from either the Christian or Moslem Mediterranean world, where slavery had been practiced (without a color code) for centuries, called slavery as an institution into question38, and they were no different. They sought the support of the monarchs to curb the cruelty of the local elites, a support which, when obtained, mainly remained a dead letter in practice. The point is rather that their messianic utopias did include Indians and Africans and that their ethnocentrism was universalist in the medieval monotheist sense of Christian/ Jewish/ Moslem vs. heathen, not yet a racial doctrine.

An important transition from the era of Spanish and Portuguese dominance in the 16th century to the emergence of northern European (English, French and Dutch) empires and control of the slave trade in the 17th century is the belief that the New World inhabitants were descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel. It is here that the connection is made between the Spanish expulsion of the Jews, the diaspora of Jews and New Christians in different New World projects, and the ultimate appearance of the Enlightenment doctrine of race.

The encounter with the New World shook European culture after 1492 as profoundly as the Copernican revolution after 1543, if not moreso. The flood of cosmography, travel accounts, new plants and animals, and above all previously unknown peoples and cultures stretched the doors of perception past the breaking point. Europe had notions, however fantastic, of the Old World civilizations such as Islam, India and China; it had notions, however fantastic, of

ancient Egypt, and the empires of Alexander and the Caesars; it had within its own borders Celts, Slavs and other peoples whose existence converged on various current ideas of the

"primitive". Even encountering peoples such as the Aztecs, Mayans and Incas, however exotic they may have seemed39, still did not challenge a concept of "civilization" they knew from Old World experience. But nothing they could mine from tradition quite prepared them for the encounter with "primitives", "peoples without the state", in the Caribbean, the Amazon or later in North America. To situate such peoples for themselves, they could only draw on the legacies of the two strands of Greco-Roman classicism and Judeo-Christian monotheism. Columbus, as was indicated earlier, knew at the mouth of the Pernambuco in 1498 that he was near the garden of Eden, and for more than 150 years Europeans would debate whether the New World peoples were the Lost Tribes of Israel, the descendants of Ham, the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the Biblical Ophir, descendants of a Phoenician voyage, the survivors of lost Atlantis, the descendants of Gog and Magog, or the peoples of King Arthur's island of Avalon.40 The Renaissance had for half a century before the discoveries been excavating a vast lode of the lost, or half-buried legacy of classical antiquity; the heretical currents which prepared the way for the Reformation had been reviving the idea (against the whole weight of the Church) of the "original community" and the "apostolic poverty" of Christ and the disciples, and this mass of cultural memory came

rising to the surface, like a sunken cathedral, just in time to provide the "imagination" for the encounter with a previously unknown continent. When, 150 years later, the new tools of scientific and rational critique had turned the battle of the "ancients and the moderns" in favor of the latter, and had destroyed this "epistemological grid" provided by tradition, the West could invent the pseudo-scientific idea of race.

The theory that the inhabitants of the New World were descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel is, once again, the link between anti-Semitism in Spain and the beginnings of race theory in the rising English, French and Dutch world empires of the 17th century. Europe had the historical experience of Africans; the new race theoriy first emerged out of the debate about the Indians. The Lost Tribes theory was first articulated by various Spanish writers on the New World in the 16th century, and, as indicated, some of the Franciscan New Christians were struck by Old Testament parallels in Aztec culture.41 But the theory first created

a sensation when systematized by the Amsterdam rabbi Menasseh ben Israel (a marrano and teacher of Spinoza) in his 1650 book Esperanza de Israel (Hope of Israel).

Menasseh's book told of a Jewish traveler in South America who was convinced that there were Hebrew words in the language of his Indian guide, and who concluded from conversation with the guide that "a lost tribe of Israelites still lived in the South American highland"42, and therefore went to meet them. The traveller returned to Amsterdam and told his tale to Menasseh ben Israel, where its messianic overtones in 1648 fit into the overall apocalyptic climate of the end of the Thirty Years' War, the most radical phase of the English revolution (where the Fifth Monarchy Men were at the peak of their influence), and a massive pogrom against Jews in the Ukraine43. Menasseh's book came to the attention of Cromwell, who met him in 1655 to consider the readmission of Jews to England44, which began the following year.

But in the very year of Menasseh's meeting with Cromwell, another book appeared in Europe that marked the final phase of the pre-Enlightenment debate on the meaning of the New World peoples. This was Isaac La Peyrere's Pre-Adamitae (The Pre-Adamites)45. Using the most advanced methods of the new Biblical criticism, La Peyrere's book seized on internal inconsistencies in scripture to argue that the Bible itself proves that there were people before Adam. For La Peyrere this meant the overthrow of the Bible's monogenecist explanation of the origins of humanity (and therefore of the peoples of the New World), and the truth of a polygenecist view of multiple origins. La Peyrere's book was denounced all over Europe by Catholics, Protestants and Jews. (No one dared to defend it publicly until Voltaire, a century later, and he was still an isolated voice). La Peyrere was arrested a few months after Pre-Adamitae appeared, was threatened with the gravest consequences, and had to convert to Catholicism and go to Rome to personally apologize to the Pope to exculpate himself.46

Nevertheless, his book became popular with the radical milieus of the period, such as the remnants of the defeated left wing of the English Revolution. The Digger Gerard Winstanley, like many others, saw in Pre-Adamitae support for a completely allegorical reading of the Bible.47

La Peyrere's book had been daringly radical Bible criticism in the mid-17th century, and he saw all peoples, Adamites and pre-Adamites, saved in the

messianic recapture of Jerusalem.

But others seized on his demolition of the authority of the monogenecist account in scripture and used it to justify the newly-emerging racist color code. In 1680, in Virginia, the minister Morgan Godwin, in a work called Negro's and Indians Advocate, polemicized against people in the American colonies who were using polygenecist arguments influenced by La Peyrere

to deny that blacks and Indians were human. In 1774, Edward Long's History of Jamaica used polygenecist theory to precisely this end. In 1844, Alexander von Hulmboldt, the German scientist, argued in the first volume of his book Kosmos that it was necessary to uphold the monogenecist theory against evidence "as the safe means of avoiding classifying people as superior and inferior".

The death of Adam, together with the defeat of the English radicals, had by the 1650's closed the Joachimite cycle, and ended the debate that had begun in 1492. The triumph of the moderns over the ancients meant that the models and the "epistemological grid" of both Greco-Roman classicism and Judeo-Christian messianism were exploded, either for interpreting new peoples or for interpreting the motion of bodies in space. The epicenter of the West was now the Anglo-French rivalry for world empire. The first phase of political economy began, and one of its first practitioners, Sir William Petty, wrote the first known treatises proposing a world hierarchy of races, The Scale of Creatures (1676). Petty groped toward the definition of an "intermediate stage" between man and animal, in which he could locate the "savage":

Quote:

"Of man itself there seems to be several species, To say nothing of Gyants & Pygmies or of that sort of small men who have little speech... For of these sorts of men, I venture to say nothing, but that 'tis very possible there may be Races and generations of such"48 "...there be others (differences-L.G.) more considerable, that is, between the Guiny Negroes & the Middle Europeans; & of Negroes between those of Guiny and those who live about the Cape of Good Hope, which last are the Most beastlike of all the Souls (?Sorts) of Men whith whom our Travellers arre well acquainted. I say that the Europeans do not only differ from the aforementioned Africans in Collour...but also...in Naturall Manners, & in the internall Qualities of their Minds."49

Here were the unanticipated extrapolations of LaPeyrere's radical Biblical criticism. Here is one of the founders of political economy also founding an unprecedented color-coded world hierarchy of races. A truly modern figure, indeed. Henceforth, as the Atlantic slave trade rose exponentially to its 18th century peak, the naturalistic world view of the Enlightenment could impose itself, sadly tied in so many cases to such an "epistemological grid"50. The New World Indian was no longer a possible descendant of the Lost Tribes; rather, as the Puritans said, "Satan had possessed the Indian until he became virtually a beast". Where there had once been the kingdom of Prester John, there now was only the Guinea coast, the Bight of Benin and the Middle Passage.

Henceforth, the concept of race could be invented.51

Part Two

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1. This article will appear in two parts; Part One will treat the first appearance of racial ideas, in the Spanish "blood purity" laws and the expulsion of Jews and Moslems after 1492, and the transition period up to the 1650's in which Europeans debated whether the New World peoples were descended from the Lost Tribes of Israel; Part Two, in the next issue, will deal with the appearance of the new concept of

race itself, beginning in the 1670's, in the first phase of the Anglo-French Enlightenment.

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2. To take only one example, though the most important, along with the legend of Prester John (cf. below): the Black Magus/King in depictions of the Nativity scene.

"That the African Magus should have been adopted in all German regions by 1470 is by itself remarkable. Still more extraordinary is the fact that the black King was then borrowed by every other significant school of artists in Western Europe, sometimes almost immediately, and by ca. 1510 at the latest." (P. Kaplan, The Rise of the Black Magus in Western Art, Ann Arbor, 1985), p. 112. The social basis for this view is suggested by the black presence at the 13th century court of the Frederick II (Hohenstaufen), the last important Holy Roman Emperor of the medieval period: 'The proclivity for blacks at Frederick's court was not merely a capricious idiosyncracy, but a means of suggesting the Hohenstaufens' claim to a universal imperial sovereignty that might include "the two Ethiopias, the country of the black Moors, the country of the Parthians, Syria, Persia...Arabia, Chaldea and even Egypt.' " (ibid. p. 10) These imperial pretensions may appear laughable, and are definitely part of a crusader ideology, but they indicate that the universal ism of the Holy Roman Empire was for

Christians, not for a non-existent category of "whites".

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3. To say this is not to imply that the inhabitants of "Western Christendom" (a concept more appropriate than Europe for the medieval period) did not periodically find all kinds of reasons to hate, kill and oppress Jews, Moslems and "heathens"; it is merely to say that the division of the world between Christians and non-Christians was religious and was not race-based. In medieval Spain, for example (one of the most significant cases, for centuries, of co-habitation between the three monotheisms and also the country in which proto-racism first appeared in the early modern period), Christians and Moslem often converted back and forth as the front lines fluctuated.

Moslems enslaved by Christians in the wars of reconquest could, in a generation or two, become serfs (C. Verlinden, L'esclavage dans l'Europe mediévale, Ghent 1955, p. 139ff.) Passage from slavery to serfdom varied widely around the Iberian peninsula, but it depended everywhere on the balance of forces between Christian masters and serfs, not on any race-based criterion.

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4. -Joachim's ideas are briefly sketched in N. Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium, Oxford, 1983, pp. 108-110. For a fuller treatment, cf. M. Reeves, Joachim di Fiore (New York, 1977). (Joachim's thought also anticipated some of the unfortunate futuristic ideologues of the defunct Soviet bloc whose cybernetic visions of full communism got them into trouble because they failed to include the guiding role of the Party).

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5. The story of the Prester John legend is told in R. Sanders, Lost Tribes and Promised Lands, (Boston, 1978) Ch. 3.

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6. A. Milhou, Colon y su mentalidad mesianica (Valladolid, 1983), p. 217 refers to this prophecy.

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7. Columbus' letter reporting the proximity of paradise is quoted in V. Flint, The Imaginative Landscape of Christopher Columbus (Princeton, 1992), pp. 149ff.

8. J. Abu Lughod, in Before European Hegemony. The World System A.D. 1250-1350 (Oxford, 1989) sketches out this world oikoumene, whatever problems exist in her idea of what constitutes capitalism.

9. It is not widely recognized that the breakup of the medieval world in Europe, the Middle East, India and China were relatively simultaneous phenomena, attended everywhere, from Japan to Poland, by the 13th and 14th century eruption of the

Mongols, and by the Black Death. Of the four major Old World civilizations, western Europe suffered least from the Mongol invasions. (Abu Lughod)

10. R. Hilton, ed. The Brenner Debate (London 1985), discusses the impact of 14th century agrarian revolts on the end of serfdom and the triumph of wage labor in the English countryside.

11. The many works of Christopher Hill, such as The World Turned Upside Down (London 1987) are thebest introduction to these currents. An old classic, originally written in 1895, is Eduard Bernstein's Cromwell and Communism (New York, 1963).

12. The radicals were repressed and ebbed away during Cromwell's Commonwealth and the Stuart restoration after 1660; only in the 1688 "Glorious Revolution" was absolutism defeated and constitutional monarchy finally consolidated, after which

"Locke drove out Habakkuk" (as Marx put in the Eighteenth Brumaire, referring

to the shift away from religion in the ideology of the bourgeoisie).It is not often pointed out, in typical accounts of the Enlightenment, that the British slave trade to the New World also expanded exponentially after the 1688 "Glorious Revolution" in England, often cited as the beginning of the English phase of the Enlightenment. As late as the 1680's, the Royal African Company, the government slave-trading monopoly (of which John Locke was a board member), transported approximately 5,000 slaves per year, whereas in the first nine years after 1688, Bristol alone handled 161,000 (E.

Williams, Capitalism and Slavery, New York 1980, p. 32).

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13. It is an anachronistic mistake to see Greek, Roman, Moslem or Chinese attitudes toward the "Other" in the ancient and medieval periods as "racist". For the ancient Greeks, a "barbarian" was someone who did not participate in a polis; the Romans, also, throughout an enormous empire, thought of themselves as citizens of a city, and saw the "Other" in those who were not (J.A. Armstrong, Nations Before Nationalism, UNC Pr. 1982, p. 134) . F.M Snowden's Blacks in Anquity, Cambridge 1970, Ch.

VIII, documents the absence of "color prejudice" among Greeks and Romans. A more recent and powerful demonstration that the idea of race is a modern invention is I.

Hannaford, Race: The History of an Idea in the West (Baltimore, 1996). "In Greece and Rome, the organizing idea of race was absent so long as the political idea flourished to reconcile the volatile blood relations (kinship)...with the wider demands of the community." (p. 14)

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14. -Significant conversion and inter-marriage made the "blood purity" necessary to distinguish between "Old" and "New" Christians, the latter being converted Jews.

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15. J. Greene, The Death of Adam, (Ames, 1959), pp. 39-54, describes some of the scientific debates in geology and paleontology of the late17th century that

called into question Biblical chronologies; similarly, P. Rossi, The Dark Abyss of Time, (Chicago, 1984), particularly Ch. 36.

16. The latter were the sons of Noah, from whom the different groups of humanity presumably descended after the flood.

17. We say "proto-racism" because, even when a specific notion of "blood purity"

(limpieza de sangre), underwriting an idea of "purity of (Christian) caste" (lo castizo) began to be implemented in Spain ca. 1450, its aim was still to distinguish Christians and Jews, and therefore remained enmeshed in the older medieval communal conceptions. Nevertheless, the Inquistion, which recognized "lo castizo" only for those who could prove they had no Jewish ancestry for three generations, thereby anticipated the Nazi Nuremberg laws by nearly 500 years.

18. Spain also expelled many Moslems after the final conquest of the Arab kingdom of Granada.Those who remained, the so-called moriscos, were forcibly expelled between 1568 and 1609. Prior to the end of the 14th century and the end of

"convivencia", the Spanish kings referred to themselves as the "kings of the three religions" (cf. S. Sharot, Messianism, Mysticism, and Magic Chapel Hill, 1982, p.

72). For the classic statement of Spain as the product of the mingling of the "three castes" cf. A. Castro, The Spaniards, Berkeley, 1971, Ch. III.

19. This 15th century anti-Semitism was "new" in comparison to the anti-Semitism of the ancient world because it rested on a new biological definition of racial purity previously unknown.

20. According to Yves Renouard, "...the boundary lines that determine to this day the frontiers of France, England and Spain were more or less definitively settled in a series of battles which occurred between 1212 and 1214." (cited in I. Wallerstein, The Modern World System, vol. 1, (New York 1974), p. 32.

21. The first large-scale outbreaks of medieval (as opposed to modern) anti-Semitism in Europe occurred at the beginning of the Crusades, in 1096, therefore coinciding with a major acceleration of Europe's expansionist recovery from the ebb point of the 9th and 10th centuries. Even worse outbreaks occurred in 1348-49, when the Jews were blamed in many locales for the outbreak of the Black Death. (A discussion of the evolution of anti-Semitism in the high Middle Ages is in K. Stow, Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe, Cambridge, 1992, Ch. 11) Stow contrasts this with the lower Middle Ages: "...the early medieval period has always been considered a politically favorable one for Jews...Jews had a clearly demarcated and stable political status, which only in later centuries began to erode." (ibid. p. 43) Most observers date the beginning of economic slowdown in the high Middle Ages from the beginning of the 14th century (cf. for example G. Duby, L'économie rurale et la vie des campagnes dans l'Occident mediéval, Paris 1962, vol. 2, part 4.)

22. The first major pogrom in Spain began in Seville in 1391, and then spread to many other cities. The first laws of racial purity were enacted in 1449 and approved by the king in 1451. The Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, the same year as the completion of the reconquest. Jews who converted and remained were persecuted by the Inquistion; after 1555 proof of blood purity was required for holders of public office. Cf. J. Gerber, The Jews of Spain (New York, 1992), pp. 127-129. The early modern "pre-history" of racism in Spain is also covered in I. Geiss, Geschichte des Rassismus, (Frankfurt, 1988), Ch. III.

23. Greco-Roman antiquity divided the world between those who were of the city and those who were not; the medieval world, as indicated, divided the world into believers (of one of the three monotheisms) and "heathen".

24. As Hannaford puts it: "Between the expulsion of the Jews and Moors from Spain and the landing of the first Negro in the North American colonies in 1619, the word

'race' entered Western languages." (op. cit. p. 147)

25. English resistance to the major Catholic powers, first Habsburg Spain and then the France of Louis XIV, was Protestantism' s first line of defense after 1558, when Protestant survival against the Counter-Reformation was anything but certain; this hostility to Catholicism went so deep into English popular culture that, three centuries later, it still survived in the American "Know Nothing" anti-immigrant (essentially, anti-Irish) movement of the 1850's.

26. The early (16th-century) English and French intrusions into the Spanish empire, in search of a passage to Asia which would allow them to circumvent the Spanish domains, at a time when England and France were capable of little more than exploratory missions and transient, failed colonies, is told in P. Hoffman, A New Andalucia and a Way to the Orient, (LSU Pr. 1990).

27. Figures on the New World slave trade from the 16th to the 19th century, broken down by colonial power and by century, are in A.M. Pescatello, ed. The African in Latin America, (New York 1975), pp. 47-48. These figures show Spain bringing 292,500 slaves to the New World in the 17th century, while Britain brought 263,000

to its (Caribbean) colonies; in the 18th century, i.e. after the Glorious Revolution (cf.

footnote 2 above) and in the high tide of the Enlightenment, shipments of slaves into the British colonies in North America and the Caribbean increase nine times to almost 1.8 million, while Spain's share only doubles. The greater economic significance of the Caribbean, as compared to North America, is shown in P.

Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census, (Madison 1969), p. 134; as late as the outbreak of the American Revolution, Jamaica and Barbados accounted for ca. 50% of all slaves sold in British colonies, while the southern colonies of North America accounted for only 20%.

28. France did continue to support attempts to restore the Stuarts well into the 18th century, and Britain still had to fight major wars, which increasingly took on the character of world wars, in which overseas rivalry with the Spanish and French empires was a major issue, As part of that rivalry, both France and Spain militarily supported the rebellion of the American colonies after 1776. Spain's empire was still expanding in the Pacific Northwest as late as 1790, and Thomas Jefferson, after American independence, believed absorption of the new United States by Spain (which owned Florida until 1820) posed a greater threat than re-absorption by Britain.

29. Estimates of total Jews expelled from Spain range between 800,000 and 2 million.

They were expelled in turn from Portugal in 1497. Combined with the expulsion of the Moslems after 1492, and the "moriscos" (Moslems who initially remained) by 1609, the loss to Spanish society was a major factor in Spain's later economic decline.

30. Expelled Jews were known as "marranos" (swine).

Officially, the only Jews who went to the New World colonies of Spain and Portugal were the so-called "conversos", or New Christians; the Inquisition began tracking them there in 1522. Other Iberian (Sephardic) Jews went to the Netherlands and from there, two or three generations later, arrived in the New World colonies of Holland.

31. H. Kamen, in Inquisition and Society in Spain (Bloomington, 1985), p. 41,

shows that in the initial decades after 1492 the overwhelming majority of victims of the Inquistion were formerly Jewish "conversos", i.e. New Christians; ca. 1530 the net was widened to suspected "Lutherans"; and still later to Moslems (statistical table p.

185).

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32. Serious evidence exists for the New Christian backgrond of Vives, Vitoria, Luis de Leon, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, Gongora, Gracian, Cervantes, and Las Casas. On the Jewish and Arab elements in the work of one of these figures, cf. L.

Lopez Baralt, San Juan dela Cruz y el Islam, Mexico City, 1985.

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33. The Spiritual Franciscans' view of "apostolic poverty" prepared them to see in New World inhabitants people easily won to Christianity.

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34. -This story is told in J.L. Phelan, The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World, Berkeley, 1970. The impact of Joachimite ideas in Mexico is also described in L. Weckmann, La herencia medieval de Mexico, vol. 1, Mexico D.F.

1983, pp. 258-268.

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35. The meshing of messianic ideas taken from Jesuits, including New Christians, with Incan resistance to Spanish rule is described in A. Flores Galindo, Buscando un Inca: Identidad y utopia en los Andes, Lima, 1988. The Jesuit Vieira (1608-1697), drawing on the apocalyptic scheme of history in the Old Testament prophecy of Daniel, foresaw a Portuguese-led "fifth empire" of "saints", echoes the Fifth

Monarchy Men of the English Revolution. In fact, Vieira was in both Paris and

London in the 1640's.

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36. Although not directly in the Joachimite millenarian tradition, Bartolome de las Casas (1474-1566) directly challenged the forced labor of Indians more directly than the millenarians themselves. Las Casas was a Spanish priest (possibly of New Christian background) in Cuba who, for over 10 years, made his living off the encomienda, a system of Indian forced labor, but who in 1514 revolted against the Spanish New World system and devoted the rest of his life to agitation against it. He returned to Spain and attempted to win the Church hierarchy to his project of creating free labor associations of Spaniards and Indians. His perspective was flawed from the beginning by his proposal to substitute African slaves for the Indians, a proposal he ultimately repudiated, but only later. His first efforts failed, and he withdrew to a Dominican monastery where, for 10 years, he sharpened his polemical arguments.

After the conquests of Mexico and Peru, Las Casas returned to the New World to further agitate against the encomienda, and to write major works on the colonial system and in defense of the Indians. In 1542 the Habsburg emperor Charles V issued a compromise in the "New Laws", which would gradually abolish the encomienda, but even this compromise led to a rebellion of the colons, including armed revolt in Peru.

As bishop of Chiapas, Las Casas confronted Spanish elites in the New World , trying to force the application of the "New Laws", but Charles V withdrew them to stop the colon rebellion. Las Casas resigned his position and returned to Spain once and for all. He threw himself into writing, and in 1550-51 confronted Giner de Sepulveda in Salamanca in a debate, in front of Charles V, over whether the New World Indians were "slaves by nature" in Aristotle's sense, and whether evangelization by force was legitimate. Las Casas' defense of the natural freedom of all human beings, and opposition to to the use of force again influenced legislation, again unapplied. Las Casas, of the more sober and less apocalyptic Dominican order, echoed a version of the Franciscan belief in the regeneration of Christianity through the evangelization of the Indians, but by the end of his life limited himself to arguing that the Spanish crown had a right only to evangelize in the New World, but was obliged to respect Indian freedom and property.

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37. There were important exceptions to this. Catholic syncretism, the ability to appropriate the gods and goddesses of another culture into the Christian pantheon of saints, has existed since the Church's conversion of the Greco-Roman world. Some of the New Christian conversos in the Franciscan order found themselves fascinated with Aztec and Mayan culturebeyond the mere needs of evangelization. Their story is told in Sanders, op. cit. ,Ch. 16. The Jesuits also claimed to find evidence that the apostle Thomas, after evangelizing in India, had continued on to Mexico; this was crucial to them because it overcame the embarrassing 16-century time lag in the arrival of the word of God in the New World. This is another demonstration of the religious belief in the unity of humanity which had to be overcome before any race theory was possible "(the Spaniards')....world system, founded on revelation, and their very religion would collapse if the Bible had lied or simply omitted mention of America; ignorance, forgetfulness, and injustice on the part of God were all equally untenable.

If there existed a positive truth independent of revealed truth, all European thought, from St. Augustine to Suarez, must go out the window." J. Lafaye, Queztalcóatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness, (Chicago, 1976), p.

186 and Ch. 10 generally.

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38. 16th and 17th century attacks on slavery focused on excesses of cruelty and violence, not on the practice as such (D.B. Davis, The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture, Cornell UP, 1966, pp. 189-196); as late as the 15th century, the Palermo slave market sold Greeks, Arabs, Slavs, Tartars, Turks, Circassians, Russians and Bulgarians (Verlinden, op. cit. p. 385); in the 16th century, the majority of the slaves in Spain and Portugal were what today would be called "white".

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39. Bernal Diaz, a companion of Cortes, describes the awe of the Spaniards upon first glimpsing Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital, (which may have had as many as a million inhabitants in 1519), and how they instinctly reached for imagery of

fantastic cities from the chivalric romance Amadis of Gaul (1505) to find parallels in their own culture. (cf. B. Diaz del Castillo, Historia de la Conquista de Nueva España, Mexico D.F., 1980, p. 159).

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40. A vast literature exists on this subject. Probably the best book, outrageously never translated into English, is G. Gliozzi's Adamo e il nuovo mondo (Adam and the New World) (Florence, 1977) whose subtitle "From Biblical Genealogies to Racial Theories (1500-1700)" could not more concisely summarize the thesis of this article.

Gliozzi shows that the concept of race could not exist until scientific critique, beginning with Biblical criticism, had swept away all the legacy of explanation in the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian streams of Western culture. A comparable, but less comprehensive perspective is found in A. Grafton, New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery (Cambridge, 1992). On the impact of New World biology and botany, cf. A. Gerbi , Nature in the New World, Pittsburgh 1985.

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41. R. Sanders, op. cit. p. 187.

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42. R. Wauchope, Lost Tribes and Sunken Continents: Myth and Method in the Study of the American Indians, (Chicago, 1962), p. 53. Cf. pp. 53-59 for the history of the theory, which was still held in early 19th-century America, and had been supported by Roger Williams, John Eliot, William Penn, and the Mathers; it is still held today by the Mormons.

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43. -Sanders, op. cit. Ch. 30 tells the story of Menasseh's book; the theory convinced John Eliot, in Massachusetts, to translate the Bible into Algonquin.

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44. ibid. p. 371. "it was an empire than the English were not inheriting from the

Spaniards, by way of the Dutch, so why not inherit the services of their Jews as well?"

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45. In fact, LaPeyrere (1596-1676) knew Menasseh ben Israel personally. La Peyrere was from a Bordeaux Protesant family and, according to one major study, was probably yet another Marrano. (R. Popkin, Isaac la Peyrere, Leiden, 1987, pp. 22-23).

His early work was right in the line of Joachimite prophecy, except that, of course, it was the French king (and not, as Vieira asserted, the Portuguese) who would convert the Jews and lead them back to the recaptured Holy Land. Even after his repudiation of Pre-Adamitae, he continued to defend its theses privately.

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46. According to Popkin, (op. cit., p. 14) both the Pope and the General of the Jesuit order, in private, had found La Peyrere's book quite entertaining.

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47. ibid. p. 39. The complex fate of the theses of Pre-Adamitae, from the Enlightenment up to the present, is told on pp. 115-176, its immediate impact in England is described in Gliozzi, op. cit. pp. 565-621.

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48. Here, indeed, is a predecessor that contemporary "difference" theorists have overlooked.

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49. Quoted in M. Hodgen, Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeen Centuries, (Philadelphia, 1964), pp. 421-422.

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50. A. Gerbi, The Dispute of the New World. The History of a Polemic 1750-1900

(Pittsburgh, 1973)is a remarkable survey of Enlightenment thinkers such as Buffon and de Pauw and their belief that not only humans, but also plants and animals, degenerated in the climate of the New World.

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51. The English Enlightenment phase of the origins of the concept of race will be, as indicated earlier the subject of Part Two.